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PAPERS READ

BEFORE THE

ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

I.—*State of the Colony of Swan River, 1st January, 1830.*
Chiefly extracted from Captain Stirling's Report. By John Barrow, Esq., F.R.S. Read 22d Nov., 1830.

IN the infancy of the Royal Geographical Society of London, and in this early stage of our proceedings, the Council may perhaps not be indisposed to receive such communications as may convey useful information, though not possessing that degree of minute accuracy which may be expected from the proceedings of the Society in its more mature state, when the higher objects for which it was instituted shall claim more marked attention, and when a more extended knowledge of its views shall have been diffused at home and abroad.

With this feeling I have been induced to submit to the Society a paper, drawn up from an authentic source, on the actual state of the Swan River Colony, at the commencement of the year 1830, about six months after its establishment. The subject may fairly be considered as not altogether unimportant at this moment, when so many conflicting statements and opinions have been promulgated, by which persons disposed to emigrate to that quarter are left in suspense as to the steps it may be advisable for them to take.

It would seem desirable, for other reasons, to collect and distribute information regarding New Holland, or, as it is now more generally called, Australia. Hitherto, a country as large as Europe has been represented on our maps nearly as a blank. Yet, as this extensive territory will, in all probability, in process of time, support a numerous population, the progeny of Britons, and may be the means of spreading the English language, laws, and

institutions, over a great part of the Eastern Archipelago, it is presumed that every accession to our knowledge of its geographical features, however limited, will be acceptable to the Society.

Some strange opinions were at one time held regarding the formation of this extensive country. When the Blue Mountains behind Sydney were first passed, which was not till many years after the earliest establishment of the colony, and the waters there were found to take a westerly course, it was concluded that this new country—a recent creation according to some—had an inclination, or dip, on every side towards its centre, and that all the waters from the surrounding ridge fell, as from the rim of a basin, into a Mediterranean Sea, or a succession of swamps or marshes. And the loose surveys made of its coasts having afforded no discovery of any river of magnitude, tended to confirm this notion. Recent researches, however, and particularly those of Captain Sturt, have proved that, as in most other countries, the land dips from the central parts towards the coasts, and that the waters, as most waters do, drain off into the sea. On this subject I may quote a letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Dumaresq, Secretary to the Governor of New South Wales:—

‘It will not perhaps be uninteresting to you,’ says that officer, ‘to be informed, that, simultaneously with Captain Sturt’s discoveries, which have solved the problem respecting the construction of this Continent, it has been ascertained that the hypothesis, with regard to its post-diluvian formation, is as groundless as that of its absorbent interior marshes.

‘Some caverns in the neighbourhood of Wellington Valley have lately been examined, and found to contain innumerable specimens of fossil bones, deeply imbedded in stalagmite, or in indurated clay. I have seen some of these bones, which must have belonged to animals that do not now exist here, and are larger than those of the rhinoceros or buffalo. Teeth, apparently similar to those described by Buckland, have likewise been collected; and we have now many other proofs that this country was once inhabited by beasts of prey, and that it is coeval with the rest of the world.

‘The country in the neighbourhood of Wellington Valley is of limestone formation, and the ridges are perforated by numerous subterraneous caverns, which branch off in various directions. Others exist in the Shoal Haven gullies, (the most remarkably formed country, perhaps, in the world,) and which will probably be found to contain similar diluvian remains.

‘To the above physiological facts I may add, that Captain Sturt does not appear to think it at all improbable that there is

‘ an opening from “ Lake Alexandria ” into the Gulf of St. Vincent ; and he is of opinion that the whole of that country is formed by alluvial deposit from the vast interior, through which flow the rivers Murray, Darling, Castlereagh, and Peel ; as also that the Darling will be found to be one of the longest rivers of the world.

‘ We have recently ascertained that the finest tract of land exists to the south, immediately beyond our present boundary, which is abundantly watered by streams said to take their rise from snow-clad mountains. These facts induce me to think we should abandon the idea of pushing our settlements, at present, further into the interior, and that we ought to form a belt of colonization along the north and south coasts. The water communication would give employment to seamen, and be the means of converting the Colonial youth into sailors, who, in case of need, might contribute to the manning of the navies of the mother country.’

Thus far Colonel Dumaesq. With regard to the discovery of bones, Major Mitchell, the Surveyor-General in New South Wales, thus writes to Mr. Hay :—‘ At length an immense quantity of the remains of antediluvian animals has been discovered, precisely in a situation such as that described by Professor Buckland. What is most singular is, that there appears no affinity, as far as I can discover, between these bones and those of the caves of Europe, although some are very large. A bone, the *ulna* of some huge animal, is somewhat like that of an ox, but it is four times as large.’

Colonel Dumaesq’s observation, that the finest tracts of land are found towards the south coast of this great continent, is fully confirmed, as to the western part of the same south coast, by the discoveries made by Dr. Wilson of the navy, to the distance of eighty or ninety miles northerly, from King George’s Sound, recently annexed to the settlement of Swan River. Of this journey a brief account is contained in the following paper, and it is also sketched on the map. Our acquaintance, however, is yet far from being minute with this south coast, from Cape Leuwin to Port Philip,—an extent of at least fifteen hundred geographical miles,—otherwise an estuary of sixty miles in length, by thirty or forty in breadth, could not have escaped observation until discovered from the interior ; and our knowledge of other parts of the coast is even still more defective. For instance, on the western side, from North-west Cape, in lat. 22° , to Clarence Strait, in lat. $12\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$, a distance of more than one thousand miles, there are numerous large openings, not yet examined, in which no land is visible to the eye of the spectator in the interior, and through

which rivers of the first magnitude might discharge their waters unseen and unknown. The whole of this coast is fronted with innumerable islands, with deep channels between them, through which, according to Captain King's expression, 'the tide rushes with frightful rapidity.' He suspects the great mass of land called Dampier's Land, extending from Cape Leveque to Pointe Gantheaume, to be an island, behind which there is an opening of at least eight miles in width; and here, as well as in the Buccaneers' Archipelago, he found the rise and fall of the tides six and thirty feet, which on other parts of the coast did not exceed eight or nine feet. From these phenomena Captain King comes to the same conclusion with that excellent old navigator Dampier. 'From all that is at present known,' he observes, 'of this remarkable opening, there is enough to excite the greatest interest; since, from the extent of the opening, the rapidity of the stream, and the great rise and fall of the tides, there must be a very extensive gulf or opening, totally different from everything that has been before seen.' But in parts of the coast so dangerous, no survey can be made, except in boats, or by land, along the shore.

* * * * *

'It will not be necessary for me,' says Captain Stirling, in his official despatches to Government, 'to recapitulate the inconveniences we had to encounter on our first arrival. The winter season, the loneliness of our situation, and ignorance of the country, and of the navigation of the coast, and our anxiety as to whether we should succeed or fail, were sources of uneasiness which are happily passed away. It is our present condition that will interest you most, and to that I shall confine myself.'

The first operation, on arriving at Swan River, was to mark out the site of two towns, to one of which was given the name of Freemantle, close to the entrance of the river; to the other that of Perth, about nine miles higher up, on its right or northern bank. In August, 1829, the settlers began to crowd in; and having received their respective allotments, commenced the erection of temporary buildings. In November, the country on the banks of the Swan and Canning Rivers, extending between the sea and the mountains, and to the distance of fifty miles to the southward of Perth, was thrown open to them. And many at once established themselves on their lands, regardless of any danger from the natives, who indeed were found to be so harmless, that single individuals even, who had traversed the country, and particularly among the mountains, had never met with any interruption, nor sustained any insult or injury at their hands.

As settlers continued to flock in, towards the end of the year

Captain Stirling found it necessary to explore the country to a greater extent than had hitherto been done, by which he obtained a knowledge relative to the coast seventy miles to the northward of Rottenest, and ninety miles to the southward of it. In this extent, the only discoveries of any note were six rivers, of no great magnitude, and a bar harbour, capable only of receiving boats. To the northward, the land seen was of indifferent quality, while that to the southward was found to improve in fertility, the farther it was explored in that direction. One of the settlers was so much struck with the fertility of the soil about Port Leschenault, that he determined at once to fix his abode there. He describes this estuary to exceed that of Melville Water in the Swan River, in point of size, and superior in the beauty of its banks. It receives two rivers flowing down from the Darling range, which is here about the same distance from the coast as at Swan River. Across the mouth of the Colley is a bar, but to the distance of sixteen or eighteen miles within it maintains a depth of water from six to two fathoms, and here it becomes perfectly fresh. The plains are well wooded with large timber trees, and the whole country wears the appearance of an English park. Port Leschenault is fit only for the reception of small craft, having a bar with no more than from three to four feet, and two fathoms water within.

The nature of the soil in the extent of country here mentioned is of various descriptions. On the sea coast, where a continued calcareous ridge exists, no gramineous plants are to be found, but several species of shrubby or herbaceous plants rise out of the sandy surface, affording good nutriment for sheep and cattle at all seasons of the year. Next to this calcareous formation is a parallel breadth of a superficial soil, still somewhat sandy, bearing large timber trees, and affording good but rather scanty feeding for sheep and cattle. Adjoining this district of light, sandy soil, is a considerable breadth of red land, extending to the base of the Darling mountains, the soil of which varies from red sandy loam to the richest red marl and clay, apparently fit for all agricultural purposes. The fourth variety of country is the uneven surface of the mountainous range, which is of granite and trap formation. The valleys of this range are exceedingly rich and verdant, and the hills themselves, although occasionally rugged by the protrusion of the rocks, afford magnificent timber, and very excellent sheep lands. The whole breadth of this range of mountains had not been crossed*, though examined to the distance of twenty-five miles from the western edge. Straggling parties of natives were occasionally met with; and in one or two places were hovels of

* See, however, on this head p. 16, where subsequent discoveries are noticed.

grass and twigs, very small, and resembling in shape the half of a bee-hive cut vertically. The men and children were naked: their women did not appear. They seemed to be a good-humoured, inoffensive people. In several of the valleys are pools and rills of water. The fifth and last variety of soil is that which is found on the banks of the rivers and streamlets. It is alluvial, and generally very rich, bearing spontaneously good native flax, many edible roots, and thirty or forty species of grasses. This description of the country applies more particularly to the extent of about forty miles to the southward of Swan River. Farther south, the sandy tract disappears, and the rocky ground is less protruding; the climate is cooler, and the surface seems to indicate the fall of more frequent showers.

From the little inconvenience which a large portion of the settlers suffered from want of dwellings, and exposure to the night air for weeks together, the opinion is universal that the climate is favourable to health in a very uncommon degree. Captain Stirling says, that for two or three of the summer months it was deemed prudent that the workmen should not work exposed to the sun between the hours of ten and three; but that great exertion at other times produced no consequent lassitude: and he adds that, with the exception of ten or eleven days, the summer heat had been tempered by southern breezes, and thereby rendered very agreeable. Rain had not fallen for about three months; but this drought fortunately occurs at the season proper for harvest. And though the grasses and other herbage are at this time much injured by the great and glowing heat of the sun, it is worthy of remark, that on sandy soils the plants sustain the heat much better than on the clay. None of those whose roots are near the surface can escape from the effects of the baking which this latter kind of soil sustains.

Captain Stirling speaks with great caution on the productive power of the soils, and how far they may be modified by climate. 'The most skilful of the farmers who have come from England,' he observes, 'profess themselves at a loss to form a judgment here, as processes in vegetation are going forward before their eyes, even on mere sands, which are wholly irreconcilable to their pre-existing notions and modes of judging. I think, however,' he continues, 'I am safe in stating that the sandy soils on the coast produce a shrubby herbage, on which horned cattle, horses, and sheep have lived now throughout the hottest and the coldest parts of the year; that there is, between the hills and the sea, a breadth of red loamy soil, on which grain and artificial grasses may be produced; that the banks of the rivers and numerous streams offer the richest alluvial loam; and that the hills themselves, although occasionally very rugged, are capable of

‘becoming good sheep pasture, as the soil on their sides, where it exists at all, is invariably excellent, resting on granite and whinstone.’ He states that the supply of water for the use of the people and for cattle is abundant everywhere. Though the rivers are not of great magnitude, they are of value, by serving as so many canals for boat navigation. Lakes, streams, and springs are found in every direction; and even on the sea-shore wells have been rarely sunk in vain. From this abundance, and from the considerable provision of food for live stock which the territory seems to possess, he thinks the pastoral life will be found more profitable than the agricultural, and will be chosen by the bulk of the settlers.

It is too early yet to form any estimate as to the number of cattle, horses, and sheep which may be kept on an average of any given extent of land; but that very considerable numbers may be sustained is evident from the fact, that, at the very driest season of the year, when no rain had fallen for three months, there were both food and water in abundance. This is an important fact, as the power of supporting these animals without artificial food will secure not only a clear profit to their owners, but a supply hereafter of animal food for the use of the settlement. The live stock which has been introduced is described as being, in several instances, of the very best quality, and, with very few exceptions, arising chiefly from neglect, all kinds of it have done well. The bullocks and sheep, even in the dry season, fatten upon the natural grasses and herbage. Horses from England have not prospered so well, but even these have maintained themselves without any food beyond the natural herbage. In short, he observes, ‘I am happy to say, with reference to grazing, that there is every reason to be satisfied with the result of our experience up to the present time.’

The views of those settlers who look forward to tillage are as yet confined to gardening and farming for their own consumption. Grain is not likely to be cultivated to any great extent, as it can be imported from Java and the surrounding colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land at a cheaper rate than it can be produced in the new settlement, at least for some time to come. Captain Stirling thinks, however, that flax of a very superior kind, and a species of hemp, both growing spontaneously, may probably be cultivated to advantage; that timber, which is abundant, may find a profitable market; that wines, olives, figs, opium, and tobacco may be looked to as future sources of export; but that these and other articles must await the time when the present subsistence and comfort of the settlers shall have been provided for, and a stock of the necessities of life permanently secured.

Many of the settlers of Perth and Freemantle have employed

themselves in the construction of boats for the conveyance of their goods on the rivers. The number of these in the settlement were not less than forty. Some of the settlers employ themselves profitably in fishing; and Captain Stirling has reason to believe that the settlement will be able speedily to export cured fish to Java, Whales are abundant on the coast, and attention has been drawn to the establishment of a whale-fishery, that can hardly fail of success. Cockburn Sound is a safe and extensive anchorage: it has been made easy of access now by buoying off the channel leading into it; and no place could be better situated for a marine establishment than the eastern shore of Buache or Garden Island, where careening wharfs may be constructed at a trifling expense.

The favourable position which this part of the coast of New Holland occupies, with reference to the trade of the Eastern seas, Captain Stirling observes, has been shown in some measure by the arrival of ships from various parts of the world, to the number of more than thirty, in the seven months of the first year of the establishment of the colony. Some of those from England landed all their cargoes there; but the greater part merely called, and after landing passengers and part of their cargoes, proceeded on their routes. Two vessels had been sent to the Malay islands; and Captain Stirling understood that four small vessels were intended to be employed in that and other lines of trade, diverging from Swan River as a centre. By means of these, it will soon be determined whether this position will prove favourable for the disposal of British manufactures among the easternmost of the Malay islands.

In the formation of all new colonies, there will necessarily be found a large portion of the early adventurers giving vent to feelings of discontent and disappointment. It always happens that many of such adventurers are men unsettled in their views, inordinate in their expectations, and wholly unfitted to encounter the difficulties which are inevitable in the infancy of a colony; and that such persons should be disappointed, discontented, and their ruin completed, is quite in the nature of things. Accordingly, among the numerous settlers who have flocked to Swan River were not a few whose minds and bodies were but ill-suited to encounter the struggles and distresses which are the unavoidable concomitants of a new settlement. 'Many, if not all,' says Captain Stirling, 'have accordingly been more or less disappointed on their arrival, either with the state of things here, or their own want of energy to surmount the difficulties pressing around them—not greater, however, than such as must necessarily be experienced in the beginning of every new colony;' and, it may be added, far less severe than those which the American colonists had to encounter, or those who first established

themselves on the opposite side of Australia. Captain Stirling, however, observes, that ‘from this state of depression the active and stout-hearted have now recovered; and ten or twelve of the leading men having occupied their lands, and having declared themselves fully satisfied with the quality of the soil and the condition of their cattle, I consider the undertaking to be now safe from the effects of a general despondency, which at one time threatened to defeat the views of his Majesty’s government in this quarter.’

Among the heads of families there is a great majority of highly respectable and independent persons; in the working class a great variety. Some masters have been careful in the selection of their servants and workmen; but the greater part have either engaged the outcasts of parishes, or have brought out men without reference to character—men who, incapable of succeeding at home, are not likely to prosper in a new settlement to the extent of their groundless and inconsiderate expectations. ‘If it be possible,’ says Captain Stirling, ‘to discourage one set of people and to encourage another, I would earnestly request that, for a few years, the helpless and inefficient may be kept from the settlement, whilst to the active, industrious, and intelligent, there may be a confident assurance of a fair reward for their labours.’

The state of the colony, abstracted from the official returns, at the end of the year 1829, and of six months from the first arrivals, was as follows:—

Number of residents, 850. Non-residents, 440. Value of property giving claim to grants of land, 41,550*l*. Lands actually allotted, 525,000 acres. Locations actually effected, 39. Number of cattle, 204; of horses, 57; of sheep, 1096; of hogs, 106. Number of ships arrived between June and December, 25.

Though, strictly speaking, there is no harbour at or near Swan River, this deficiency is, to a certain degree, compensated by the capacious anchorage in Cockburn Sound, capable, as Captain Stirling informs us, of containing in safety a thousand ships. By the entrance being buoyed off, it is rendered of easy access for large ships; but being strewed over with rocks, it becomes wholly impracticable when the buoys are removed. Any number of vessels would lie in perfect safety in this large sound from an enemy’s squadron on the outside, as the middle part of it is out of mortar range, either from the sea or the land side. Such a port, situated as this is, in the hands of an enemy, might become, in any future war, ten times more destructive to British trade than even the Isle of France was in the last.

No other port or harbour exists on this line of coast, with the exception of Port Leschenault, accessible only, as has been observed, to boats. The great Baie Geographe, whose shape and

position, with regard to the points of the compass, is precisely that of the Table Bay of the Cape of Good Hope, has safe anchorage only when the winds are to the eastward, southward, and south-west. But on the southern coast of Australia, about one hundred and fifty miles to the eastward of Cape Leuwin, is the safe and excellent roadstead of King George's Sound, with which are connected two harbours, sheltered from all winds, and completely land-locked — Princess Royal harbour to the north-east, and Oyster harbour to the north-west; the former having an entrance and anchorage within for the largest ships; but the entrance of the latter has not more than fourteen or fifteen feet at high water. Plenty of wood and good water are to be had in either of the harbours, and also in the sound. The position, close to the tracks of all ships proceeding to New South Wales, and the inviting conveniences of these two harbours, induced the government, some few years ago, to take possession of them, and to establish a small military post there, under the direction of General Darling. It has now, however, very properly been placed under the authority of Captain Stirling, as a part of the Swan River colony, and will probably become, at no great distance of time, the head-quarters of the settlement. Dr. Wilson, of the navy, an intelligent and enterprising traveller, who has visited every part of Australia, from Raffles Bay in the north to King George's Sound in the south, has given some account of the country contiguous to the latter. In company with one or two others, and a civilised and intelligent native belonging to the post, he travelled about eighty miles in the interior to the northward, and returned by a more westerly course, traversing in the whole about two hundred miles over a country hitherto unexplored. Each of the party being obliged to carry his own blanket, provisions, and water, (the latter, however, being found unnecessary,) the excursion occupied eleven days; but such is the excellence of the climate of this country at all seasons of the year, but more especially agreeable in the summer months, that they felt no inconvenience by sleeping on the ground in the open air, nor did they suffer any privation worthy of notice. Dr. Wilson being furnished with no other instrument than a compass, the points marked down in the sketch of a chart which accompanies this notice, are the result only of the bearings and estimated distances traversed, and must therefore be considered only as conveying a very general description of the nature of the surface travelled over.

It will be evident, from the inspection of this sketch, and still more so from the journal out of which this notice is extracted, that, although in the immediate neighbourhood of King George's Sound the surface is sandy and wears an unpromising appearance, yet in the interior there is no want of good grassy plains, large

orest-trees, rivers, lakes, and ponds of good fresh water, in almost every part of the country traversed by Dr. Wilson. He says, indeed, 'that the country is so well supplied with water, that 'those of his party who wished it enjoyed the luxury of a cold 'bath, at least once a day, one only excepted.' The surface travelled over consisted chiefly of fine plains and rich valleys, alternating with ridges clothed with shrubby plants, a great proportion of the former being capable of tillage, and the rest affording good pasturage for sheep and cattle. On the ranges of the loftier hills were clumps of forest-trees of large dimensions. On the most barren lands were various species of *Banksia*, stunted swamp oak, the grass-tree, and other plants similar to those on the same kind of soil in New South Wales. On the alluvial flats along the banks of the rivers and streamlets, the vegetation was most luxuriant. In the glens of the mountains, the blue gum, the turpentine, the box, and the apple-trees predominated, many of them measuring from twenty to thirty feet in girth, and from fifty to sixty of trunk, free from branches. The prevailing genus here, as in most parts of New South Wales, is the *Eucalyptus*, of which but few of the species afford useful timber. The green wattle was but occasionally observed: it flourished most luxuriantly on the hills in the neighbourhood of Mount Lindsey. This mountain is described as a peak rising out of a ridge to the height of five or six thousand feet, terminated in a square of about thirty yards each side, perfectly level, paved with minute particles of quartz, and having at each angle an immense block of granite. The extensive view from this mountain gave Dr. Wilson an excellent opportunity of crossing his former bearings round the whole horizon.

Out of the same range of hills, running nearly north and south, rise three other peaks, which he named Mounts Roe, Mitchell, and Frankland. Between this and a more easterly parallel range, Dr. Wilson is satisfied, from his own observation and from the accounts of the natives they fell in with, that a tract of good land will be found extending into the original intended limits, and now a part, of the Swan River Settlement; and he observes, 'crediting the report of the natives, which, from the correctness 'of their description of the nature of the land to the eastward, and 'from their general intelligence, I am justified in doing, much 'excellent land may be found to the north-east, beyond the 'second range of hills. I do not,' he adds, 'hesitate to say, 'without fear of future contradiction, that the area passed over 'by us contained as much, if not more, land, fit for all rural purposes, as any portion of equal extent, at least as far as I know, 'in New South Wales.'

Numerous lagoons or lakes of fresh water occurred, to one of which they gave the name of Loch Katrine; it was from seven

to eight miles in circumference, and frequented by vast flocks of black swans, wild ducks, and various kinds of aquatic birds. The streams issuing from the two ridges, east and west of their route, were equally numerous; and three of them, named the Denmark, the Hay, and the Sleeman, were of considerable magnitude, being in several parts not less than a hundred yards in width, and deep enough in parts to float a vessel of two or three hundred tons. All the streams had a southerly direction, and the three above named fell into an extensive inlet, which communicated with the sea by a channel composed of loose calcareous sandstone, about seven hundred yards in width, but which, as was afterwards found, is contracted occasionally to thirty or forty yards; even then it has a sufficient depth of water to admit of boats. On a subsequent visit to Mount Lindsey, by Captain Barker, the resident, accompanied by the intelligent native belonging to the establishment at the post of Fredericton, another large inlet was seen about thirty miles more westerly, lying between Cape Chatham and Point Nuyts; and the opinion of the natives they met with was, on comparing it with the former inlet, that vessels of very considerable size might pass into it through the entrance. Captain Barker, as well as Dr. Wilson, bears testimony to the general accuracy of the descriptions given by these aborigines; he observes, however, as they cannot swim, and possess no kind of floating vessel, they have no means of speaking correctly as to the depth of waters that are not fordable.

As no survey has been made of that part of the southern coast lying between Cape Leuwin and King George's Sound, except that of ascertaining the positions, in sailing along it, of a few inlets, rocks, and projecting headlands, it is not improbable that, on a closer inquiry, many inlets of a similar kind will be found on this line of coast, towards which the internal waters pursue their courses to the ocean. Indeed, there is every appearance of the mouth of a river existing in the large opening which is left in the charts, a little to the eastward of Cape Leuwin, at the bottom of an open bay named 'Dangerous Bight;' and when it is considered, that the late expedition of Captain Sturt has been the means of bringing to light the existence of a river, whose course cannot be less than fifteen hundred miles, and may be much more; that it forms an estuary or lake of sixty miles in length, and from thirty to forty in width, through which its waters are discharged into the sea in Encounter Bay; that Flinders surveyed the western point of this bay, which he called Cape Jervis; that Baudin, who sailed round it, has laid down an uninterrupted line of coast; and that both were unconscious of any such river or estuary,—it is not assuming too much to conclude, that many rivers and inlets still remain to be discovered on this, and, indeed,

on every other, coast of Australia, which measures in the whole extent from six to seven thousand geographical miles.

Since the date of the preceding remarks another report has been received from Captain Stirling, brought down to the end of October, 1830. In this report he observes, that ‘the progress of the settlement during the present year, although not unopposed by many adverse circumstances, has been as rapid as could have been expected or desired.’ He says, indeed, ‘that a greater increase than that which has taken place of ships, persons, and property would probably have been disadvantageous to the welfare of the settlement while struggling in its infancy;’ and he adds, ‘that although individuals may have suffered in the undertaking, the settlement is now securely established, and its future prosperity no longer doubtful. Much has yet to be accomplished for its advancement, and there will probably be much individual disappointment and distress; but with a healthy climate, abundance of good land, an advantageous position for trade, and some valuable indigenous products, I trust the issue of the undertaking will not disappoint public expectation.’

In order to make himself acquainted with the nature of the country to the southward, the Lieutenant-Governor embarked, with the Surveyor-General and some others, on board a schooner; examined Geography Bay throughout its whole extent, and explored the interior to some little distance; the surface was uneven, rising into high granitic hills, most of them rugged or sandy on their summits, but the valleys contained a considerable quantity of excellent land.

The Vasse River was the next point examined, to the distance of three or four miles from the coast, but the result was not satisfactory, the soil being too light and sandy; but the straight and vigorous growth of the trees seemed to contradict the apparent poverty of the soil. Fresh water was abundant in this district.

They next anchored off the bar of Port Leschenault, where the country presented so favourable an appearance, that a detachment of the sixty-third regiment was landed, together with stores and provisions for the better support of the settlers; and such were the facilities for these troops housing themselves, from the abundance of building materials, that in a very few days the party was comfortably lodged, and were protected against the approaching winter.

From hence a party set out and explored the country in every direction, as far as the summits of the Darling range. The whole of this range, consisting of well-wooded hills and fertile valleys, continued to bear the character of great productiveness as far as the eye could reach to the eastward. The general result of these

explorations may thus be briefly stated. The water which forms the little harbour of Leschenault receives three rivers, one flowing from the south east, called the Preston; one from the east named the Collie; and one from the north-east, joining the Collie, to which no name appears to have been given. The banks of all these are composed of rich alluvial soil. The Preston is navigable for the largest boats about five miles from its mouth, and is at that point a running stream of good fresh water. The adjoining country is well clothed with timber trees. The Collie is navigable ten or twelve miles, nearly up to the first range of the hilly country. At first the banks are sandy, but from the junction of the northern stream it improves greatly, and becomes of an excellent description. On the whole, the district around Port Leschenault appeared so favourable for settlers, that Captain Stirling left the detachment above-mentioned for the protection of those already there, and such others as might be induced to avail themselves of the grants of land which the Lieutenant-Governor was prepared to make. The climate is stated to be decidedly cooler than at Swan River, and judging from the quantity of grass and the verdure of the foliage, it appeared to the party that this district was capable of sustaining a dry season better than the country farther to the northward, and that the duration of drought was not so long. It was thought remarkable, that in the whole of their excursions no natives were seen, though traces of them were evident and numerous in several places.

On a second excursion to the southward by the Lieutenant-Governor, accompanied by Captain Currie of the navy, and Lieutenant Roe, the Surveyor-General, they doubled Cape Leuwin, and anchored off the mouth of an inlet communicating with the sea in the north-west corner of the great bay, commencing with the Cape, and extending easterly as far as the Black Point of Flinders. In the charts it is called 'Dangerous Bight,' but can only be said to be dangerous when the southerly winds prevail. This discovery of an inlet and river in this particular spot is just what is anticipated in the former part of this report. Here it was determined to establish a town, to be called 'Augusta,' where a river, which was named the 'Blackwood,' fell into the inlet; and several settlers to the number of fifty persons, including three heads of families, their servants, and children, disembarked together, with a detachment of troops for their protection. The following is the substance of the Surveyor-General's report:

'The portion of the southern coast seen during the excursion, taken in connexion with our previous knowledge, leads to the belief, that there are three distinct parallel ranges of primitive mountains, traversing that part of the territory of Western Aus-

‘ tralia which borders on the sea coast, in the direction of north
‘ and south. The highest and easternmost of these has its southern
‘ termination near to King George’s Sound. The second termi-
‘ nates at Cape Chatham, and is that of which General Darling’s
‘ range behind Swan River is a portion. Cape Leuwin is the
‘ southern termination of the third range, which is inferior in
‘ altitude as well as in extent to the other two, disappearing at
‘ Cape Naturaliste, and only showing itself again at “Moresby’s
‘ Flat-topped Range,” about half-way between Swan River and
‘ Shark’s Bay, or three hundred miles to the northward of, and
‘ on the same meridian with, Cape Leuwin.

‘ On these ranges and their intervening valleys the soil varies
‘ according to position and altitude. On the mountains and
‘ higher hills the surface is rugged and stony; in the lower sides
‘ of both the soil is excellent; but in the principal valleys and
‘ the lower grounds, where the sandstone formation prevails, it is
‘ of a very inferior description, except where the alluvial deposit
‘ of the rivers gives it a different character. These general rules
‘ are exemplified in the neighbourhood of the newly established
‘ town of Augusta, and may be taken as applicable generally to
‘ all other parts of the territory, except on the sea-coast, where
‘ the regular formations have been invaded and modified by ex-
‘ traneous substances, generally of a calcareous nature.

‘ The position chosen for the new town possesses the advan-
‘ tages of excellent soil, plenty of good water, a pleasant aspect,
‘ and easy access in moderate weather to the anchorage, and to
‘ the interior country. The inlet is of considerable extent, and
‘ leads to the river we called “Blackwood,” and which has a
‘ southerly direction for fifteen miles, and a westerly one ten
‘ miles, before it ceases to be navigable by boats. Its banks are
‘ covered with good timber of the stringy bark and red gum; but
‘ the soil is a light sandy loam, which is seldom sufficiently strong
‘ for successful cultivation. The best soil, the finest blue-gum
‘ timber, and some good grass, are mostly to be found on hilly
‘ land; but on the general surface there is usually found food for
‘ cattle, and very good sheep pasture on the downs skirting the
‘ coast. The anchorage is sheltered from the usual winter winds,
‘ but is open to those which blow between south and east-south-
‘ east. The position of Augusta, with reference to the navigation
‘ of these seas, and the quality of the surrounding country, will
‘ make it a convenient place for vessels to stop at, on their
‘ way to the eastern colonies from England, India, and the Cape;
‘ and on these grounds there is great reason to hope, that it will
‘ soon rise to a considerable degree of commercial prosperity.’

Another discovery has been made by Ensign Dale, and a small party on the eastern side of Darling’s range, and at the distance of

fifty miles due east from Perth. Having reached the eastern base of this range, they found the waters taking an easterly direction, and discharging themselves into a river of considerable magnitude, running north-west, about sixty yards in width, very deep, and having a strong current. This river, in all probability, will be found to discharge itself into some inlet on the coast; perhaps in some part of the unexamined coast of Shark's Bay,—though Captain King is inclined to think its mouth will rather be found somewhere about 'Moresby's Flat-topped Range,' where, in passing, he observed clefts in the hills, and a finely wooded country down to the sandy beach. The hills of the Darling range were generally covered with a red loamy soil, producing good grass and wild vetches. The trees were chiefly of mahogany, of a very vigorous growth, the blue and red gum, and a few Banksias. Where the waters first began to take an easterly course, the trees were chiefly of blue gum, casuarina, and black wattle, and a tree which is stated to be similar in its growth to an apple, bearing a fruit resembling in form, but exceeding in size, an unripe hawthorn berry. The wood of this tree had a remarkably sweet scent, and the bark a delicate pink colour. Mr. Dale says, 'a specimen which we brought home with us has been pronounced by some professed judges to be a species of sandal-wood.'

They met with no natives except three men on their return, who were very civil, and desirous of making themselves useful; but they observed many traces of them; and in ascending the great river, about twenty-four miles to a spot where the hills assumed a rugged and romantic character, they discovered, under a great mass of granite, a large cavern, the interior of which was arched, and had all the appearance of an ancient ruin. 'On one side,' says Mr. Dale, 'was rudely carved what was evidently intended to represent an image of the sun; it being a circular figure about eighteen inches in diameter, emitting rays from its left side, and having within the circle lines meeting each other nearly at right angles. Close to this representation of the sun were the impressions of an arm and several hands.' It is stated, that from these heights the view to the eastward, for twenty to thirty miles, exhibited an undulating surface and a well-wooded country.
